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european trash cinema

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As you look through this issue, you'll undoubtedly notice a few changes (just in time for our Anniversary Issue). Some are subtle, others much more blatant.

Most obvious are the articles on European rock starlet, MYLENE FARMER. Why cover her work here? Because her music clips are, in many respects, the essence of European Trash Cinema. Violent, sexy and visually stunning, they are unlike any so-called rock videos produced in this country. Next, you'll notice there are no actor or director filmographies. It's a matter of space really (plus the fact that I hate typing the fucking things). With the diversity of material coming in these days, I just can't justify giving up pages to an endless stream of data. And look again at that front cover. If anyone had told me that one day, ETC would have a color cover by French comics superstar MOEBIUS, I'd have told them they were full of merde. Thanks go out to Moebius, Jean-Marc L'Officier of Starwatcher Graphics, Inc., and Steve Bissette for allowing this to happen.

Finally, regarding the back cover-- it's the stunning Dalila Di Lazzaro who started her illustrious career in ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN. But she's never been better than her role in PAJAMA GIRL CASE.

Til next time--

---Craig

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SHOOTIN' THE SHIT

random thoughts, comments, and reviews by
CRAIG LEDBETTER

There's probably nobody left in the fanzine world who doesn't know that my co-editor and close friend, Tom Weisser, runs VIDEO SEARCH OF MIAMI. And you are, I'm sure, aware VSoM has been translating and subtitling films for years now. His company has

subtitled a ton of films and yet only the well known are usually covered in print. So, this time I'm going to spotlight a few gems (as opposed to turds he does like, well, pick any Franco film for instance).

ESSERE TENUTO (aka **BEING CAPTURED** aka

BABYSITTER)-- A bizarre fucking film that starts off perverse and gets even stranger. A young girl is brought to the house of a young rich couple to baby sit their young child. In no time at all she discovers the little bugger is a horny dwarf who's into water sports and other S&M games. In the end she gains her revenge but it's a twisted journey till she gets there. Simply disgusting.

DON'T OPEN THE DOOR FOR THE MAN IN BLACK-- Directed by Giulio (**DEATH LAID AN EGG**) Questi in more somber strokes than his earlier, acid-influenced days, this is a Giallo that will stay in your mind long after it's over. A beautiful but suicidal musician tells her psychiatrist that, due to her new lover, she's finally found happiness. Just as quickly she kills herself (or does she?) causing the psychiatrist to become involved in a search for answers to her death.

By the film's conclusion, she discovers far more than she ever wanted to. Suspenseful and enthralling, this is a thinking man's thriller.



See who reads ETC! Dario Argento
photo by Erik Sulev

FLOWERS WITH PETALS OF STEEL-- From cerebral to gory and sleazy is what you'll get going from the former film to this one. A virtually unknown film that features some of the superstars of the Giallo field. Gianni Garko is a doctor who's a cocksman and a brilliant surgeon. The former gets his ass in trouble when he accidentally kills an old lover, and the latter comes in handy when it comes time to dispose of the body.

When the girl's sister (played by Carroll Baker) shows up to hanger the doc for her whereabouts, the twists and turns of the plot really kick in. A nasty little number that separates the men (Italian thrillers) from the hoys (the US attempt at same).

A QUIET PLACE IN THE COUNTRY-- Don't let the title of this film fool you, as it is anything but. An eccentric (to say the least!) artist, played by Franco Nero, escapes to a country house for peace and quiet.

What he finds is enough to drive anyone crazy (or in his case, crazier). The film also features Vanessa Redgrave, music-concrete by Ennio Morricone, and psychedelic direction by Elio Petri that qualifies this one as belonging on anyone's top 10 list of weirdo Italian film experiences.

STRANGER MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS--

Forget about all those brilliant Spaghetti Westerns by Sergio Leone. The true auteur of the genre was Demofilo Fidani (*Miles Deem*). This guy had more pseudonyms than Jesus Franco (yet when he directed his only porno film, **BURNING LIPS**, he used his real name. Ass-backwards, Demofilo!) and directed some of the goofiest oaters ever.

This one features all the cliches you would expect but distinguishes itself from the pack by featuring director Aristide Massaccesi (*Joltin' Joe D'Amato*) as a gunfighter, his named? Of course: Arizona Massachusettes!

FIFTH SPEED aka **COL CUORE EN GOLA**-- For those who think Tinto Brass only makes films that star women's sexual organs, think again. In the late sixties and early seventies, he made some exciting, plot-oriented films with nary a crotch shot among them.

This one features Ewa Aulin (**DEATH LAID AN EGG**) as a lost and lonely lady who involves Jean-Louis Trintignant (**DEATH LAID AN EGG**) in her fucked up life. He, being a loser thinks he's going to help her get out of a jam and ends up paying for it big time. Made in the late sixties and heavily influenced by **DEATH LAID AN EGG** (I know, I know, enough about this fucking movie!!), **FIFTH SPEED** is like an acid flashback.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

A lot of times I'm asked about other publications. For some reason, people want to know what I like to read. So here's a partial list of some new stuff I've been scanning.

BOOK OF THE DEAD #4-36 pages, Media Publications, 26 Salford Road, Old Marston, Oxford, OX3 0RY, UK \$6.00. Editor Simon Smith continues his excellent series of issues on Living Dead films from all over the world. This is part two of his survey of Italy's output which features filmographies, reviews and interviews (including one with director Amando De Ossorio).

BLOOD TIMES Vol 2#2-28 pages, Louis Paul, 44 East 5th st., Brooklyn, NY 11218 \$3.00. The main feature this issue is an article and filmography on the German Edgar Wallace film series. There's also an interview with Jean Rollin and lots of HK film reviews.

CAMERA OBSCURA #5-28 pages, Michael Kopijn, Kloosterstraat 38, 9717 LE Groningen, Netherlands \$5.00. About half of this zine is in English and worth the trouble to track down. There is a good interview with Jean Rollin, reviews of **BODY PARTS** and **SUCCUBUS**, and a discussion of Yukari Oshima films.

DELIRIUM #2-60 pages, Media Publications, 26 Salford Road, Old Marston, Oxford OX3 0RY UK \$8.00. This is part two of Adrian Smith's ongoing coverage of Italian exploitation cinema, covering 1975-79. You complete cast and credits, reviews, lavishly illustrated with ad mats and posters to over 160 films. Essential.

FLESH AND BLOOD #2-48 pages, Media Publications, 26 Salford Rd., Old Marston, Oxford, OX3 0RY UK \$7.00. The highlight of the issue is without question editor Harvey Fenton's detailed guide to British horror films. The year's 1970, 1971, and 1972 are covered with detailed credits and in-depth reviews. Long overdue and well illustrated. Highly recommended.

GIALLO PAGES #2-44 pages, John Martin, c/o Online Publishing, P.O.Box 134, West PDO, Nottingham NG7 7BW UK \$7.00. If you only buy one magazine from this listing, this is the one! You get lots of interviews (John Morghen, David Warbeck, Mariano Bano, Lucio Fulci and Daria Nicolodia), reviews, a Laura Gemser profile and lots more! Professionally printed without a doubt an instant classic and a must have!!

HEADPRESS #8-66 pages, P.O.Box 160, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 4ET UK \$7.00.

This Adults Only publication is an awe-inspiring experience. Each issue covers the uncoverable with precision and professionalism. This one features interviews with artist Steven E. Johnson, porn auteur Patrick Collins, a guide to public toilets (with photos) and much more.

MONSTER INTERNATIONAL #3-68 pages, Tim Paxton, MPO Box 67, Oberlin, OH 44074-0067 \$5.95. The last word on the subject of José Mojica Marins and his films. Great layout, die-cut cover and beautiful poster and still reproduction. Too bad we have to listen to Horacio Higuchi's tiresome rants in between the facts. Lots more make this the best Kronos publication yet. Great Betsy Burger front cover too!!

STRANGE ADVENTURES #46-20 pages, Tony Lee, 13 Hazely Combe, Arreton, Isle Of Wight PO30 3AJ UK \$5.00. This zine covers all types of horror and SF media. There are film and book reviews, articles on soundtracks and lots more. The feature interview is with writer Christopher Fowler.

SUB-TERRENEA #9-42 pages, Jason Gray, 47 Thorncliffe Pk. Dr., #609, Toronto, Ontario Canada M4H 1J5 \$4.00. Jason continues his winning streak with this issue's contents. There are reviews of DR. LAMB, DEVIL'S BOX,

RUN AND KILL, THE RAPE AFTER and lots more along with interviews of Peter Jackson & Quentin Tarantino.

TAME #1-100 pages, Steve Fentone, P.O.Box 742, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario Canada M4T 2N5 \$6.00. Required reading with dozens of reviews and an extensive interview with Jack Taylor. No hype here, just huy it.

VIDEOOZE #5-30 pages, Boh Sargent, P.O.Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304 \$4.00. Back from the dead, Sargent weighs in with an ETC fan's dream of a zine. Lots of reviews (especially the brilliant analysis of INVESTIGATION OF A CITIZEN ABOVE SUSPICION by Walt O'Hara), an article on Countess Bathory in films and a mini-profile on Suzy Kendall.

MARQUIS de SADE: ANTHOLOGIE ILLUSTRÉE-161 pages, Glittering Images, Via Giovanni da Montorsoli, 37/39 50142 Firenze, Italy 70,000 Lira. If you've never seen any of Glittering Images DIVA albums, you've been missing out on some essential viewing. This latest volume covers (in excruciating detail) the exploits of de Sade, both in films, books and comics (by some of the greats in Europe). There's a detailed filmography in the back as

well. Be warned, this is definitely for adults only! When you write them for information, also ask them about their DIVA series (DIVA MANIA, DIVA AMOUR FOU, DIVA DESIDERIO, and DIVA FETISH). All are lavishly illustrated and come highly recommended.

LETTERS

As I've always said, your letters and comments are welcomed. Here are some recent [publishable] samples:

Very much enjoyed ETC #7. The Deodato Interview/filmography was fantastic. I am glad to see that he is proud of his Cannibal films and defends them. I must admit it saddened me to read that he has no current desire to return to the Cannibal sub-genre. He is without a doubt a great talent. The Lamberto Bava interview was interesting but too short. I'd love to see a more extensive interview.

He sounds very opinionated. Barbara Bouchet is certainly a wonderful sight. Erik Sulev's homage was a fun read and brought to mind another (who I consider incredible) ETC actress, Florinda Bolkan. Is it just me or have I seen very little written/discussed about this marvelously talented lady. Any chance of seeing a full-length feature article on her?



Kashia Figma in *Washing Machine*

One last thing, film reviews are an extremely important facet of your zine. I regard them as an invaluable source of info as I wander through the vast ETC jungle!

Ray Ranaletta
Hamlin, NY

When I was in Milan Italy last October for the MIFED Film Market, you'll be happy to know that there were flyers

everywhere for a new Deodato horror film called THE WASHING MACHINE. This should come as a big relief for those who suffered through his HOME ALONE ripoff, MOM, I CAN DO IT. Florinda Bolkan is always a possibility although on the immediate horizon are Helga Liné and Carmen Russo.

Here I thought your magazine empire had been

washed away in a hurricane, yet I walk into Tower Video in Los Angeles and see a copy of ETC #8! Glad to see your sterling publication gracing the racks of an easily accessible mass media communications mart. In reading the reviews I wonder if it's really necessary for the reviewer to say he would like to piss in the filmmaker's face (EVIL SENSES). . . but hey, I'm a filmmaker.

The interviews were definitely the highlight of the issue. Brigitte Lahaie and Jean Rollin are certainly worthy of coverage and the interviewer did not demean their work or place them in judgement and therefore I felt the interviews were more candid. No one gives a good interview when they're on the defense and besides, who wants to hear the interviewer's opinion about whether the person's work is good or not. It's the interviewee's opinions that we're here to read about.

Fred O. Ray
Hollywood, CA

Of course you're right, the crack about pissing in the director's face, should have been edited out. ETC is here to champion the work of our favorites and not take cheap shots.

By far, the standouts were the Deodato and Margheriti pieces. Although a lot of Margheriti's recent work lacks the spark of some of his

earlier output, it's great to see that he plans on chugging along and churning them out. Speaking of Antonio, When I met Paul Morrissey a few years ago, I asked him about Margheriti's involvement with the two Warhol films, since some sources claim that Margheriti actually directed them in their entirety. Morrissey had nothing but good things to say about the man and noted that Margheriti had been initially brought on to the production for a number of reasons. Two ways he aided the film were with effects and communicating with the Italian crew and actors. Morrissey claimed that in ANDY WARHOL'S FRANK-ENSTEIN, Margheriti was responsible for all the footage concerning the death of the housekeeper (where her guts dangle through the grate). There were other minor scenes but Morrissey couldn't remember specifics. Morrissey also offered some tidbits about Joe Dallasandro and Stefania Casini.

It turns out that she was one of the reasons he remained in Italy following the completion of these two films. He ended up leaving his wife and child for her as two of them began a torrid affair. Perhaps her involvement with Dallasandro explains her meaty role in ANDY WARHOL'S BAD a few years later.

Erik Sulev
Canada

Great shit Erik, now get back to work on more articles and reviews for ETC!

Loved ETC #8, especially the Jean Rollin coverage. I'm still not sick of that guy's films. Not to detract from the other great items in the issue (like the Brigitte Lahaie interview and filmography!), but the Rollin interview was amazing. Thanks!

Marshall Crist
California

Thanks a lot for plugging in the Brigitte Lahaie filmography. Unfortunately, there were a few mistranslations, the most notable one being on page 20. I . . . COMME I CARE doesn't mean I LIKE FLESH (it's not a porno film!) but I . . . LIKE I CARE, a political thriller with Yves Montand. LES BIDASSES AU GRANDES MANŒUVRES would mean YOUNG SOLDIER'S REHEARSAL FOR BATTLE. On page 28 of the Rollin filmography, the film NE PREND PAS LES POULETS POUR DES PIGEONS would mean DON'T TAKE COPS FOR IDIOTS because Poulet is a slang word for policeman and Pigeon is a slang for idiot. Again I'm not blaming anyone (your translator did a very good job), but simply pointing out some errors to avoid having them repeated elsewhere.

Lucas Balbo
Paris, France



ETC REVIEWS

DRACULA IN THE PROVIDENCES
aka Bite Me, Count (1975)
Directed by Lucio Fulci
Reviewed by Erik Sulev

The second of Lucio Fulci's sexy comedies with Sicilian actor Lando Buzzanca (the first being *EROTICIST*, an equally loopy tale about a bigshot politico who threatens his political future over an obsession with squeezing his unaware female victim's bums!). This film, like its predecessor, revels not only in the weirdness of its plot, but also with the bizarre characters who populate it, none of whom deserve to be classified on this side of normal. Fulci, along with co-scripters Pupi Avati, Bruno Corbucci and Mario Amendola have created a somewhat leftist social satire painted in such broad strokes, that no one could ever accuse them of being subtle. Definitely a must see for Fulci

fanatics, and those who like to cry out "What?!!?" while shaking their heads in disbelief.

As Constatine, the "Toothpaste King," Buzzanca plays the highstrung industrialist to the hilt. Obsessed by luck, Constatine is no less superstitious than his peasant relatives, all of whom continually harass him for cash and favors. So afraid of bad luck, Constatine even has his own personal hunchback, so he can rub his hump for luck! His wife (Sylva Koscina) won't screw him, for fear of getting "stretched out" by pregnancy, so Constatine is more than happy to go to Romania for a business trip, taking along 200 pairs of lingerie, hoping to entice a few of the local ladies. Sadly, the Communist bloc is no pick-up joint, and he has little choice but to accept the invitation of a degenerate Count Dragulescu (John Steiner), to stay the night in his Transylvanian castle.

Naturally, the obvious happens and the Italian ends up being bitten by the Count after passing out amidst a bevy of naked beauties. Unfortunately, it isn't the women who Constantine wakes up with, but rather the queer Count who was making passes at him the night before. For the would-be Casanova, this turns out to be a literal hair-raising experience and he returns home, fearing that he has been infected with the virus of homosexuality.

This "fear of being queer" is the film's most obvious non-politically correct element, but surprisingly, it isn't played to the hilt, as one would have expected. Buzzanca never lets the stereotyped swishy theatrics fly as someone along the lines of Renzo Montagnani would have done. Instead, Buzzanca appears seriously ill whenever he mistakenly believes himself being aroused at the sight of naked men. Advised by his doctor (Rossano Brazzi) to see his mistress (Christa Linder) immediately, and squash any fears of homosexuality by "doing what comes naturally."

Constantine comes to the realization that his arousal comes not from the person's sex, but rather their blood, after his lover cuts her leg open and he sucks her knee with glee. Still, it's not until after he's fleeced by a false "wizard" (Ciccio Ingrassia), that he realizes he can use his vampiric powers to his advantage, meeting his match only when confronted by an S&M bitch Goddess from Hell (Moirá Orfei), whose leather, whips and spikes (and what spikes they are!), would humble just about anyone.

When the workers at his factory stage a revolt, it is quelled when Constantine reaches a unique agreement with them. This results in their standard of living being raised, Constantine's appetite for blood is satisfied and most importantly, toothpaste production is at an all-time high!

When it comes to political films, no one has ever accused Fulci of being the missing Taviani brother, mired deep in the quagmires of political subtext and symbolism. Instead, Fulci and company get straight to the point, reminding us, the oppressed, that yes, it's true; capitalist are all bloodsuckers at heart!

**COTA DE CAZA (1983)
aka Code Of Hunting
directed by Jorge Grau
reviewed by Steve Fantone**

Jorge Grau is perhaps most well-known in North America for directing the bleak and visceral zombie gore film, *NO PROFANAR EL SUENO DE LOS MUERTOS* aka *LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE* (1974). In 1983 he tried his hand at this crime drama (aka *COTA DE CAZA*) with overtones of social commentary. The results are equally bleak. Possibly indicating Grau believes that the halls of Justice ultimately ring hollow - a point repeatedly asserted within the film - credits unfold over a progressively-emptying adjourned courtroom. Defense attorney Adela Letraga (Assumpta Serna) is convinced that violent offenders are by-products of society, resorting to criminality out of sheer desperation rather than genuine lawlessness. However, most of the judges do not share her liberal viewpoint.

Mauricio "Mauri" Fernandez (Luis Hualde) is a greasy petty thug in a leather biker jacket with ridiculously exaggerated Elvis pompadour and huge sideburns. He and his gang steal Adela's car and purse (containing her ID). Mauri plots to rip off well-to-do Adela and her family at their holiday cottage outside Madrid. Here, Adela, her husband Jorge (Victor Valverde), their children David and Laurita, and her mother Carmen (Montserrat Salvador) stay at the cottage while Jorge takes son David on his first duck hunting trip. Jorge teaches him to fire a shotgun, and afterwards presents him with the spent shell casing as a ritualistic symbol of his passage into "manhood". Importantly, Jorge's hunting rifle is a recurring prop throughout the narrative (it is the only firearm prominent in the film; all those who die do so as a result of being shot by it).

When Mauri's boys make their move, they poison the family dog and use Jorge's own rifle in commission of the cottage robbery. Jorge tries to intervene, but his brains spatter the wall as he wrestles Mauri for possession of the .12 gauge and it accidentally discharges. When

Mauri and the others hightail it, his slow-witted kid brother Johnny is left at the scene in the throes of an epileptic seizure, and captured. At a prison medical institution, Johnny is "comforted" by a priest (whose "reassuring" hand upon his knee carries ulterior motive). When Johnny realizes the padre's intentions regarding him are of a homosexual nature - the word "faggot" is shamelessly thrown about - the delinquent attacks the priest and is thrown into solitary confinement, where he dies following another attack of epilepsy.

Mrs. Fernandez has previously visited Adela's law office to plead for mercy on her sons' behalf. She self-pityingly whines regarding the social conditions which have caused her offspring to become criminals, but fiercely denies they could be capable of murder. "You can't fight violence with violence", Adela says later. Her mother is disgusted by her forgive-and-forget attitude: "Help the justice system crucify these criminals!" she screams. Adela begins to receive harassing nocturnal phonecalls from Mauri, who, since the murder, has gotten himself a red-dyed punk haircut to obscure his identity. When he learns of brother Johnny's death behind bars, Mauri contemplates revenge. On the night of Christmas Eve, while Adela and Carmen watch home videos of the late Jorge's hunting trips, Mauri and two associates again burst into the cottage.

Before young David's eyes, they proceed to gangrape his mother beneath the Christmas tree, after bludgeoning grandmother Carmen over the head with a poker. When he realizes that he cannot "consummate" the act of violating Adela, Mauri jerks himself off, before viciously cauterizing Adela's vagina with a flaming log from the fireplace (Graw's 1978 erotic nun drama, *CARTAS DE AMOR DE UNA MONJA* [Love Letters of a Nun] likewise contains a crowning act of repulsive vaginal violence). David appears in the doorway with his dead father's shotgun levelled, wounding Mauri and scattering his accomplices. Attempting to crawl to safety, Mauri is cornered by vengeful Adela, who blows the maggot away

(his gore splashes onto her face in another "blood ritual" motif). *COTA DE CAZA* ends on a touching note upon the TV screen where Adela and her late husband stage a playful "movie kiss". Freeze-frame. The End.

A more sombre aura is maintained throughout with excerpts from Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde"; ironic contrast provided by such Seasonal selections as "Silent Night, Holy Night". There are underlying themes of David's masculine "rites of passage", and the archetypal hunting motif is tied inexorably in with the action (Jorge's gun kills both he and Mauri).

Graw is a polished director with an eye for cynical details. His films are seldom lightweight and contain little humour, carefully tiptoeing the razor's edge between High Art and low exploitation. It is a polished, well-paced film with a sickeningly violent resolution. Those not averse to occasionally sharing a bleaker point-of-view may find Graw's films morbidly fascinating experiences. VSOM has done a commendably literate job of translating and subtitling.

LA BANDA VALLANZASCA (1977)

directed by Mario Bianchi

reviewed by Steve Fentone

Two cellmates, including Roberto D'Amici (Enzo Pulcrano) are accused of hanging a fellow convict with a bedsheet (presumably for wearing the absolute ugliest "hip" fashions ever seen). Consequently, they knife a guard with a homemade shiv, steal a car and escape from jail.

Cut to a pimply sex scene on a dirty bare mattress in an abandoned building (both the male and female have hairy, sweaty armpits, summing up the grubby perspective of this entire film). Roberto and his partner in crime hole up at the old building, which means *costus interruptus* for the lovers. The only apparent reason for inclusion of this scene is to inject some gratuitous skin, as it has absolutely no bearing on the plot. Roberto and ex-cellmate then go to "purchase" pistols from a gunrunning

gangster. They attempt to take off without paying for the merchandise, and in the process invade a mob wedding banquet. When overpowered and threatened with death by the mobsters, Roberto and friend are rescued by the fortuitous advent of a gang of rival gunmen. They are "hired" by a woman named Sandra (Antonella Dogan) to join her criminal syndicate. When pulled over at a police highway checkpoint, the two fugitives are forced to shoot their way out, during which Roberto's partner is killed.

Working as a hitman for Sandra, Roberto eliminates two enemy hoods at a gas station. The major part of the narrative deals with Roberto and gang's abduction of an attractive young woman named Antonella (Stefania D'Amario), whom they stash at a deserted mansion. It's not long before minor Ital character actor Franco Garofalo shows up as the aptly-named Pino, a criminal degenerate who thinks way more with his little head than his big one. When he immediately gets the hots for Antonella, much dramatic interplay follows between captors and captive. When his big-titted blonde girlfriend Caterina (Chiari) arrives, Pino gets to satiate himself momentarily during another token grope scene, but he still can't stop lusting after the kidnapped girl.

Pino's idea of a "subtle seduction" is to invade the bathroom for a quick leak while Antonella soaps up in the tub (the greaselah doesn't even wash his hands after he shakes it). Needless to say, she finds him repulsive (poor Franco's acting parts were invariably lowlife dirtbags). When Roberto is absent Pino makes his move, only to be thwarted by the other's unexpected return.

Tensions and resentments increase until Roberto contemptuously blows Pino away. When the kidnapping goes awry, Roberto transfers Antonella to a dilapidated farmhouse, whereupon a car-load of gunmen show up and lay siege to the farm. Following a desperate shootout, Roberto surrenders to the hitmen, who coldly murder him with his own gun. They then nonchalantly shoot Antonella in the head as she weeps over Roberto's corpse.

"Subtleties" (if any) in the script are difficult to decipher due to lack of English dialogue: Such as, why does Antonella suddenly decide to mourn Roberto's demise after she's treated him like a *herpes case* throughout most of the film? Why is she too gunned down by the hitmen?

This little league crime drama boasts a cast of unknowns even by obscure Italian standards. Pulcrano usually played supporting roles in B-films - as in Fernando di Leo's awesome *SCARFACE KILLER* - and lower-end spaghetti westerns (aka "Paul McCren"). Here he's "promoted" to starring status, but a leading man he ain't. With his hooked nose, jutting chin and moustache he comes across like Tom Savini's even uglier twin brother. He's fine in his role as a smallscale criminal, but it's hard to picture him in parts requiring more presence and authority (not to mention basic photogenics). The dated score consists mostly of fourth-rate disco music. As directed by Mario Bianchi, *BANDA VALLANZASCA* (VALLANZASCA GANG, 1977) makes for an okay timewaster.

HOUSE WITH YELLOW CARPET
La Casa del Tappeto Giallo (1982)
directed by Carlo Lizzani
reviewed by Bob Sargent

"An old Persian legend has it that the color yellow in a carpet only serves to highlight the color of blood. Yes. . . yellow carpets carry an ancient curse." This line, while irrelevant to the action, efficiently underscores the main thrust of this film. Without giving too much away, it's a strange tale set in a modern apartment block, which revolves around a man plotting to do away with his wife (at least, this is how it appears at first, but as the story unfolds, it will become apparent that nothing here is as it seems). While the husband is out of the house, an older gentleman shows up to buy the title carpet. He suddenly and inexplicably begins to take extraordinary liberties with his young (and, most of the time, practically nude) hostess, brutalizing her both mentally and physically. Candlelight knife torture and a gory "murder" follow. There are drugs or poisons either being injected or dropped into drinks, either is hinted

at (the carpet was originally a gift from the young woman's stepfather with whom she is obsessed (sexually, in her dreams, to the displeasure of her jealous husband), and we even get a double twist ending. This one is about as convoluted as they get, but rewarding too, so hang in there till the end (all will be explained).

THE HOUSE WITH THE YELLOW CARPET (released here in the early eighties on long-defunct Lightning Video) is what seems to be Carlo Lizzani's only excursion into the thriller sub-genre. This made for Italian TV production (based on Aldo Sella's stage play *Theater at Home*) is well crafted and almost extreme in some places (especially during a bathroom scene when a hypodermic needle is jammed into a lower eyelid in graphic closeup). Some of the stars — Erland Josephson, Beatrice Romand, Vittorio Mezzogiorno and Milena Vukotic — while virtually unknown in the U.S., are quite familiar in Italy. Particularly Vukotic (appearing here as the older gentlemen's wife) who played with Paolo Villaggio in many of the movies based on the humorous character of Fantozzi, a popular "anti-hero" in Italy. She was also in Sergio Martino's **CORNETTI ALLA CREMA** along with Lino Banfi and Edwige Fenech. Stelvio Cipriani contributes a memorable score.

Carlo Lizzani was a former war correspondent and film critic who, after training on documentaries, made his debut as a director with the 1951 feature **ACHTUNG BANDITI!** (**ATTENTION BANDITS!**) which details the partisan struggles against the Nazis. While this historical/political component became a constant in much of his work since it was introduced, it sounds like the psychological aspect of his films made its first noticeable appearance in 1954 with an adaptation of the famous Vasco Pratolini's novel called *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* (Chronicles of Poor Lovers). Other landmarks in the man's directorial career include a surrealist comedy **LO SVITATO** (**THE NUT/SCREWED UP**) (1956) and two historical dramas **IL GOBBO** (**THE**

HUNCHBACK) and **L'ORO DI ROMA** (**ROME'S GOLD**), in the early sixties. In his pre-directorial days, Lizzani collaborated on the cinematography and even acted in **IL SOLE SORGE ANCORA** (**THE SUN RISES AGAIN**) as a priest shot by the Germans.

In Italy, Lizzani is a well known and respected political director. According to sources, he is also one who has often been criticized for the use of excessive violence in his films. His **SAN BABILA ORE 20** (**SAN BABILA 8PM**), from 1976, depicted a broomstick rape scene that made the one Linda Blair was subjected to in **BORN INNOCENT** look like a Disney film in comparison. (San Babila is a square in Milano where fascist youths used to meet in the sixties and seventies.) He was also involved (in a screenwriting capacity only) in a more recent production, on video here as **SACRILEGE**, which is a racy period piece about a handsome nobleman who corrupts a young nun in a neighboring convent that featured Damiani's daughter Flaminia in the cast.

The author wishes to express his thanks to Max Della Mora, Simone Romano and Ellen Smith for giving of their valuable time and expertise in the writing of this review.

MURDER BY DESIGN (1971)
La Vittima Designata, Siamout
directed by Maurizio Lucidi
reviewed by Michael Lebbing

Stefano Argenti (Tomas Millan) is a businessman who betrays his wife: he has an affair with a model, Fahienna (Katia Christine). One day, while they're strolling through Venice, they meet the intriguing Count Mateo Tiepolo (Pierre Clementi), a very rich aristocrat who looks like a hippie. In a certain way Stefano and Mateo are attracted to one another and in recurring meetings, speak freely about their problems.

Suddenly, Mateo makes a proposal: he will kill Stefano's obstinate wife, if Stefano murders his brother. Stefano reacts in a lighthearted way to the Count's tragic stories about his brother

comparing them to a melodrama (to which the Count replies: "So? I love melodramas... not in theaters, but in life").

Stefano reacts in horror when one day his wife is murdered; he even becomes suspect number one. While his life collapses into a state of confusion and depression, Mateo keeps showing up, going to great lengths to persuade Stefano to keep his promise. Mateo then turns out to be a sado-masochistic weirdo who has lured the unsuspecting businessman into a carefully designed murder plot (hence the film's title). Finally, Stefano indulges in the dubious game and fulfills his task.

MURDER BY DESIGN is a well-crafted and directed thriller that indulges in character study as well. It benefits from the Venetian locations (especially when Luis Enrique Bacalov's baroque-like music is heard), shot on foggy autumn mornings, mirroring the melancholic nature of Stefano and Mateo's encounters. Indeed, the overwhelming nostalgia is undoubtedly one of the film's strongest points, so Aldo Tonti's excellent photography certainly deserves to be mentioned.

Though the story is a variation of Hitchcock's **STRANGERS ON A TRAIN** (1951), Lucidi wraps it in that typical Italian atmosphere which American productions are unable to create. In this respect, it's nice to see acting (and dialogue) that isn't of the wooden standard we've come to expect. While Milan has little more to do than look puzzled and depressed (after all, he's the real victim), it's Pierre Clementi who gives a fine performance and plays his twisted character with obvious sardonic pleasure. (Rumor has it Clementi is quite an odd-ball in real life, which should come as no real surprise when you've seen this film.)

By bringing in a smart sense of detail and interesting subplots, Lucidi prevents the film from falling flat as the story moves slowly and contains little suspense. For instance, the brief scenes between Stefano and his superbly cynical wife tell you more about their screwed up relationship than an entire hour of watching fucking Oprah Winfrey. Fulvio Gicca's screenplay includes an ingenious part about the "pros and cons" of Stefano's alibi, which makes

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Milian's character all the more tragic. Coupled with the perverse undertones brought by Clementi, it makes *MURDER BY DESIGN* a delightful film which blows away most snobbish psychological dramas released nowadays.

A BOOK REVIEW

UNDER THE KNIFE (1992)

written by Lucio Fulci

published by Granata Press, Italy

reviewed by Maritza Guzman

Here is an Italian language book of short stories penned by the extremely prolific Euro-Horror director, Lucio Fulci. As the *Ringraziamenti* [appendix] states, he was assisted by a variety of other people (Piero Regnoli, Daniele Stroppa, Gabriele Marconi, Alla Francia, Antonio Tentori and Antonio Bruschini)-- so it's anybody's guess as to how much creative writing Fulci actually did. But for the sake of this review, since his name stands alone on the dust jacket, we'll presume the majority of the work was his own.

The book consists of ten tales, all bizarre. Some are tragic; others horrifying. And a few are variations on themes developed in his later movies. They all emphasize his twisted sense of humor. However, the most revealing aspect of the book is they also show something usually not found in his films-- a sense of remorse.

In *THE WITNESS*, probably the best, a woman named Carla is waiting in a small resort hotel for her lover, Guido. While Carla waits, strange things start to happen. Her mirrors reveal that the owner of the hotel murdered a young woman in that very room. She discovers how the woman was killed and she sees the grisly details of how he disposed of the body. As Carla becomes engulfed with the murder, she notices the hotel staff is acting very weird. They seem to "know" that she knows.

Carla wants to leave the resort, but she must wait for Guido. Soon, through the mirrors, she learns that Guido and the hotel owner are actually the same person. The story ends as Guido knocks on her door and she prepares for the worst.

VOICES FROM THE DEPTH is actually a reworking of Fulci's *VOICES FROM BEYOND*. It's the story of a dead man's ghostly plea to his daughter to find his killer. As Rosie begins investigating, she discovers that her immediate family members are hiding hideous secrets dealing with everything from incest to blackmail. Eventually, she unmasks the true killer, her uncle. It seems he murdered her father by mixing crushed glass with ice in a beverage at the family dinner table.

In *GOOD INTENTIONS*, a grandmother loves to tell bedtime stories to her invalid granddaughter. But she is totally unaware of the nightmarish images churning inside the little kid's head as a result of the "innocent" stories.

TRIO tells the tale of Marta who is obsessed with a porno-star named Butch. She is sick of her boring husband and she has slipped into a world of sexual fantasies starring (you guessed it!) Butch.

Marta stalks the actor, watching his every move. Eventually she begins a sordid affair with Butch; her husband is suspicious. She is too wrapped up in her new world of sex and orgies to notice the inevitable. When she sees a TV report announcing the hit-and-run death of the porno star, she doesn't even hear her husband complain about "not seeing the man crossing the street."

The other stories include a *first-person narrative* of a baby who refuses to be born (*THE REFUSAL*), a tale of an old man who lives with graphic memories of his war activities (*MAN OF WAR*), a salute to the joys of cannibalism (*GOURMET*), a caustic slap at organized religion (*IN THE ABSENCE OF GOD*) and the story of a man who doesn't know he's dead (*DOOR TO NOWHERE*, which reads like a script to Fulci's film *DOOR TO SILENCE*).

Are the stories well-written?

Well, as you might expect, they aren't particularly literate. But, as escapist horror fare, they are quick reads with little time spent on flowery description or characterizations. Simply, they are entertaining in a Fulci-sort of way.



ENZO G. CASTELLARI

an interview conducted by
PETER BLUMENSTOCK & CHRISTIAN KESSLER

Is it true you started out your career as an assistant to your father Marino Girolami?

Well, in the very beginning, I was an actor. I was only 5 or 6 years old at the time. Whenever I was on holiday from school, I was involved in movie production. It was a wonderful time for me. I was always very good in sports so later on I started to work as a stuntman on several productions. As you may know, my father was a European boxing champion, so me and my brother Enio became interested in sports at an early age. I went the usual route of Italian moviemakers. I became an assistant to the assistant to the assistant (Laughs) and was climbing up the ladder with each new production. When I became a first assistant director, I also worked as an editor at the same time. I was extremely motivated and curious to

learn as much as possible about the whole technical aspect of filmmaking, since I understood quite early that you have to know how a film has to be edited to be a good director.

You have to be an experienced editor to know when a lens has to be changed, how many cameras should be used. Whenever I wasn't on the set, I spent my time in the editing room. I really learned a lot during that time which became the basis for my directing career. I also worked as an assistant for some other directors besides my father, especially on several Spaghetti Westerns in the mid-sixties. For example, Leon Klimovsky's *PER POCHI DOLLARI PER DJANGO* (A FEW DOLLARS FOR DJANGO, 1967) and Alberto De Martino's *DJANGO SPARA PER PRIMO* (DJANGO SHOOTS FIRST, 1967).

How strong did your father influence your personal style?

I think my father's influence was really strong since I learned everything on his sets. He taught me how to be fast, how to solve problems, and probably most importantly, to be able to improvise on the set if anything doesn't work out the way it is supposed to. Many young people learned a lot of interesting tricks from him. At that time, he made about five to six films a year. That's really a lot so his experience was great. I remember once he shot three films at the same time, using the same actors and crew. In the morning they were on one set, in the afternoon they had to move to another, and at night they went to some other place. Some of the sets were used in one film, while others were used in all three. Some actors quit one film, but remained in the other two, others were confused because they couldn't remember what dialogue belonged to which film. It was really crazy. Under such working conditions, the director really has to know what he's doing. Otherwise the result is a big disaster that no one would want to see. We were jumping from one set to the other, and as soon as one problem was solved, ten more were waiting for us. Actually this is quite good physical and psychological training. Don't forget, there is still editing and sound-dubbing to do at the end of production. I usually did the very last sound-mix by myself since my father was already involved in the pre-production of other movies.

You directed your first film in 1966, 7 WINCHESTER PER UN MASSACRO (7 WINCHESTERS FOR A MASSACRE). Did you choose the Western genre because of its popularity at the time or because you loved it, especially since you made KEOMA (1976) during the time when the period for such films had long since passed?

Well, whenever a first-assistant wanted to direct, the producer offered him a Western. At

that time, countless Westerns were being made here, almost like a big film factory. The producers were in desperate need of people who knew how to make a film. There wasn't much of choice and also, I was quite happy to get a chance to make my own films. It was similar to the Peplum period which took place right before the Westerns. If I had been born a few years earlier, my first film might have turned out to be a Hercules picture. However, for my generation, it turned out to be the Western. KEOMA was shot during the time when no one was making these films anymore. It was a huge success here in Italy and everybody thought that some sort of revival of the Spaghetti Western was about to happen due to this film's unique approach. I think there were three or four Italian Westerns made after KEOMA, but none of them were a real hit at the boxoffice. I don't know why.

In 1971, you made your only Giallo, GLI OCCHI FREDDI DELLA PAURA (THE COLD EYES OF FEAR).

I really loved making that picture. It was a fantastic story. The problem with Gialli is that you need a real strong story which is full of suspense, yet still interesting. Dario Argento is probably the only director who is able to make absolutely amazing films without a real story. You never believe what's going on in his films, but the way he makes them is just great. The rest of us who are not that talented need a good screenplay to deliver a nice film (Laughs). A recent work I did was a series of TV-movies with Bud Spencer, called EXTRALARGE (1990). The episode "Miami Killer", which in my opinion is the best one, is a real Giallo.

On GLI OCCHI FREDDI... you worked with German actress Karin Schubert, who was quite busy in Italy at the time.

Oh yes, I remember. She was on the set for just a short time since she only appears in the opening scene.

She's currently making a lot of hard-core porno films in Germany and Italy.

Really? I didn't know that. But isn't she quite old now (Laughs)? Unbelievable. I can remember her quite well since she had the very first silicon-breast implants I'd ever seen at the time. As you may recall, she's naked in the opening scene. I didn't notice it at the time, but later, looking in the moviola, we were all wondering what those strange scars under her breasts were (Laughs). However, she was quite nice and friendly, but I only worked with her for two days so I really can't tell you a lot about her.

One of my favorite films you've done is LA POLIZIA INCRIMINA, LA LEGGE ASSOLVE (HIGH CRIME, 1973) with Franco Nero. What's it like working with him?

I think an actor like Nero is the best thing that can happen to a director. If anyone would like to give me a present, give me the chance to work with Nero again (ED. NOTE: It happened after this interview took place with the film, JONATHAN DEGLI ORSI, 1993). If it had been possible, I would have made all my movies with him. He's not only a great actor, but you're really able to collaborate with him on the project. You can discuss ideas with him, he doesn't care if it's cold, dirty or wet. If the role demands any sacrifices, he's willing to do it. He often worked over 20 hours a day and it was no problem for him. He's really a good friend and a good person too. I really love the guy.

There are rumors that there was no script to KEOMA before shooting commenced and the writers brought you new script pages each day.

Yes, Luigi Montefiori (aka George Eastman) is very often credited as the screenwriter, but he only wrote the basic story. I never saw him on the set. The actual writers started with the screenplay at the same time when I began pre-production so on the first shooting day I had only three pages of script. On the third day

they delivered the finished script but I wasn't very fond of it to say the least. I just threw it away (Laughs). From that point on, every evening we worked on the script pages for the next day. One guy that helped me a lot at the time was Gianni Lo Freddo, you may know him under the pseudonym, Joshua Sinclair. He's in KEOMA, he plays the youngest of the three brothers. He's of American origin, served in Vietnam, attended the Strasberg Actor's studio and was a strange but interesting person. Since we had to invent everything in a very short time, we copied a lot from movies we saw and loved. I remember one critic really impressed me since he understood every single detail of the film. He recognized scenes from THE BIG COUNTRY and ON THE WATERFRONT and then there was the dialogue with Death which we took from an Ingmar Bergman movie. The whole inspiration for KEOMA came from the classics in film history.

So there isn't much left of Montefiori's original story in the actual film?

Almost nothing. The only thing that survived was the brilliant idea of the leper colony which I loved a lot.

One of the most remarkable things in KEOMA is the score by the DeAngelis Brothers and its interaction with the story. It appears to be a ballad. Was it composed before shooting began?

Oh I have to tell you this story. I knew from the very beginning that the music should be a very important part of the film, much stronger than in other films, but not one note was composed before filming began. For the editing of the film we used music by Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. I gave this edited version to the DeAngelis Brothers who made the actual music for the film. Since my editing was done to the rhythm of that music, they tried to copy as close as possible, Cohen's and Dylan's music. The lyrics were written later on. It was a highly interesting and unusual score, but the main inspiration came from Dylan and Cohen.

Concerning your use of slow-motion during scenes of violence, it's pretty obvious that you're inspired by Sam Peckinpah.

Of course. I absolutely love **THE WILD BUNCH**. I saw it many times. I remember at that time when **KEOMA** was released, a critic wrote that I was some sort of Italian Sam Peckinpah. I was so proud of this that I put the article in a giant picture frame and hung it on a wall. I just love his way of intercutting those slow-motion scenes. There's a person shooting a gun at normal speed, then you can see, in slow-motion, a guy falling from a horse, then again at normal speed, the reaction of the other one. Just fantastic.

You're considered to be the best Italian filmmaker when it comes to action films, which in my opinion is undoubtedly true. I can hardly remember another director who works with small budgets, but is still able to deliver high class action scenes. For example, the fire stunts in **I NUOVI BARBARI (WARRIORS OF THE WASTELANDS, 1982)** are exceptionally well done. How many cameras did you use for such a scene?

I NUOVI BARBARI was an extremely cheap movie. The budget was incredibly small but I'm quite proud that I succeeded in making a movie out of absolutely nothing. The whole film was shot on the outskirts of Rome. Usually, I'm lensing such stunts with three cameras and at different speeds. One at 24fps, one at 55 and one at 96. Then I'm able to edit the whole sequence in a more interesting way. It gives much more impact to the entire stunt and it looks much more impressive and powerful than it actually is.

You also seem to invest a lot of time in the preparation of such action scenes since you succeed where most American directors with big budgets and a crew of specialists fail. Even in the most difficult action scenes, there are hardly any continuity mistakes. How do you do it?

As I mentioned earlier, I have a background as a boxer so at least as far as the fist-fighting scenes I know how to stage such stunts. Normally I have a very good stunt coordinator with me, if not, I do it myself (Laughs). I just try and make everything as safe as possible for the actors. I hate to put people in danger during shooting. Everything can be solved with technical know how. You have to know what a camera is and how the fight will look like afterwards on the big screen. The preparation is not always the same, but it depends where you put the camera. I also think talent certainly helps when it comes to shooting action scenes. Many directors are afraid of such sequences and just put the camera in the corner. That's very boring. You have to know your job well, where to put the camera, when a cut has to be made and of course you have to think before shooting about what you want, and not later on in the editing room. I usually shoot these scenes with two cameras and we change their positions for each new take. It takes a long time and it's quite difficult but I think it's the best way to do it. I don't like to shoot action



Franco Nero (r) with Castellani on set of *Keoma*

sequences in long takes because it's quit dangerous for the stuntmen. They have to remember all the correct positions and if a scene is very long they might forget one.

But this means also that everything has to be made in teamwork, especially with the cameraman. Do you give your directors of photography a lot of creative freedom on the set?

Well, that's the biggest problem since the beginning of my career. I think maybe it's not that important if your director of photography is a real genius or a master, who knows everything. What's very important and essential is a competent cameraman, since he's responsible for what's going to be seen on the screen. Especially during action scenes, mistakes are a big problem. Every take is difficult to repeat and very often quite expensive. Normally it's not a problem to work for me since I prepare storyboards for all the technical people. Gianni Bergamini is undoubtedly the best cameraman I've ever worked with. He also lensed KEOMA and was the director of photography for my next film. Unfortunately, we had some personal problems, that's why we never teamed up again. I lost a great partner when that happened.

END OF PART ONE

KEOMA (1975) by Jeff Segal

KEOMA was unleashed during the twilight years of the spaghetti western. This genre, primarily Italian and Spanish in origin, was fading into history.

Poetic imagery, fluid camerwork, unusual musical scoring and a literary script distinguish it from rival European or Hollywood horse operas. Ironically, this film fleshed out a vision of nineteenth century wasteland even as the Eurowesterns themselves were

plummeting toward box office Armageddon. Thanks to form and content, KEOMA helped serve as the genre's epitaph.

Action auteur Enzo G. Castellari directed a post KEOMA project which updated the blighted world theme. His I NUOV BARBARI (1983) was into our video market as either WARRIORS OF THE WASTELAND or THE NEW BARBARIANS. Less a homage to the Australian MAD MAX movies than an energetic cash in, I NUOV BARBARI once again showcased Castellari's skill at

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staging rousing action across a surreal landscape. MAD MAX (1979) and the films it inspired, embraced a world shattered by global conflict. Only an outcast warrior strode between remnants of civilization and the predatory harbingers of anarchy. Castellari's KEOMA predated this apocalyptic scenario while allowing its hero to wrestle solace from the ghosts of his past.

Duster clad war veteran Keoma (Franco Nero) rides through a gutted, wind blown ghost town. His conversation with the sole resident, mysterious old

woman reveals that she rescued Keoma as an infant from a destroyed Indian village. The elderly lady in black reappears and vanishes almost supernaturally throughout KEOMA. Searching for meaning to his violent life, the halfbreed rescues Lisa (Olga Karlatos) from thugs who were transporting her to a plague death camp. Keoma has no qualms over using his arsenal, including a whipper shotgun with sawn off barrels and a pistolgrip (MAD MAX fans take note).

Keoma and his companion reach a torchlit town by evening. The warrior again kills to protect Lisa from thugs who suspect she carries plague. Keoma learns that war veteran Caldwell (DR. BUTCHER M.D. himself, souppussed Donald O'Brien) used a private army to takeover the local mining operation. Keoma meets with black childhood friend, the now alcoholic George (stolid Woody Strode) and adopted father, ex-gunner William Shannon (William Berger). Shannon regrets a brutal life that left his bullying sons (Antonio Marsena, John Loffredo, Orso Maria Guerrini) callous and greedy. The hero revives George, Shannon and the townspeople from spiritual limbo. All had renounced control over their lives until Keoma arrived. The resulting struggle leaves almost every major character dead. Keoma finally duels his brothers in the ghost town as the old woman midwives Lisa. The sound of each badass perishing is eerily smothered by Lisa dying while birthing her infant. Now guided by purpose, Keoma leaves the newborn with the elderly woman. KEOMA's mood is established during its pretitle sequence. Castellari and

cinematographer Alace Parolini created a portrait of decay. The desolation escalates beyond this ghostly village, becoming a reoccurring motif that culminates in the living dead concentration camp where plague victims are imprisoned.

The environment of Keoma is as nihilistic as any setting found in previous Eurowesterns such as DJANGO (1966), THE GREAT SILENCE (1968) or CUT-THROATS NINE (1971). It is appropriate that Keoma is dressed with grays and browns that almost camouflage him in the grim surroundings. In some respects, he started off the movie as dead as the fallen towns.

KEOMA revels in fluid camerawork. From the opening sequence to a triumphant climax, the visual narrative restlessly crawls across the countryside, or for a crucial moment, pauses to accent drama (Keoma, poised on a hilltop like a horse riding avenging angel; lingering on a character's face when racked by memories). The kinetic camerawork, coupled with striking staging, benefit KEOMA with a unique look. Also, by making the narrative so restless, Castellari calls attention to the careful, deliberate movements of his warrior hero before each action scene.

The action in KEOMA interrupts the frenziedly edited, lightning swift choreography characteristic to spaghetti westerns with the slow motion slaughter popularized by Sam Peckinpah. Though blood spillage is evident, the camera dwells more on strangely balletic deathspasms than gory wounds. The growth of violence from gun duels to fullscale battle is integral to the

character of Keoma. As one of the last notable western heroes, it is appropriate he dispenses it so stylishly. Equally stylish is KEOMA's soundtrack. The score is overwrought and innovative enough to alienate potential fans. The most prominent feature of the Maurizio and Guido De Angeles composed score is its elegant soliloquies; the singers, female and male catalog the weariness of two characters, the old woman and Keoma, unable to properly express emotion. Ironically, the knowing voice representing the elderly lady is strofing and virile. Though projecting energetic confidence, Keoma himself is personified by a worn out singing voice caked with doubt. Unlike the pointless folk ballads in Lucio Fulci's FOUR GUN MEN OF THE APOCALYPSE (1975), the KEOMA score accents, not merely adorns, transpiring events.

The strangest element in KEOMA is its atmosphere of temporal dislocation. Most of the major characters are literally haunted by their past. Castellari and crew reinforce the porous quality of the present through innovative flashbacks, the mythic old woman who dates back to Keoma's childhood, and fondly remembered music from George's battered hanjo. Two visits to the same ghost town sandwich KEOMA, further mixing past and present until the situation is resolved. Unadventurous viewers need not fear, however. Though at times incredibly hallucinatory, KEOMA is still a spaghetti western. No matter how ambitious it ultimately fulfills genre expectations. The salvation that Keoma brings leaves the dying land fertile with spilled blood.



MYLENE FARMER

by Thomas Weisser

Who the hell is Mylene Farmer?

And why is she in the pages of *European Trash Cinema*?

Simply, Mylene is one of the world's most popular contemporary singers. She began her extraordinary career in France in 1984 with the Polygram release of *Mammon A Tort* [*Mother Is Wrong*], a clever dance track that introduced her to the raging nightclub circuit. She followed that release with her first pop single, *Plus Grinder* [*Stop Maturing*], a "coming of age" song which both shocked and thrilled the jaded French audience.

Later, that same year, Mylene established herself as the vanguard European songstress with the release of *Libertine*, a song that

transcended language barriers throughout the Continent. *Libertine* became Mylene Farmer's first gold record, selling enormous numbers in Italy, Spain, Germany, England, and of course France.

From 1986 through 1994, she amassed a string of 12 consecutive Top Ten singles, culled from five Platinum albums. She is, perhaps, the only European singer to have a *Best Selling Pop Hit*, simultaneously, in Europe, England and Japan— not once, but twice (*Pourvu Qu'Elles Soient Douces* [*As Long As They Are Sweet*] and *My Soul Is Slashed* (English Language) (French version: *Que Mon Coeur Lache*)).

Today, her new releases are greeted with rabid enthusiasm from her legions of fans. And

her concerts are considered the hottest event of the season— so popular, in fact, that they spawned a highly successful motion picture production *Mylene Farmer En Concert* (1990), an incredible six camera extravaganza directed by Laurent Boutonnat.

But the most amazing aspect of Mylene Farmer's meteoric stardom is, as of this writing, she remains conspicuously unknown in the United States.

Sadly, there are two reasons for this paradox.

(1) The average American consumer is embarrassingly cavalier. Most of us are not bilingual, and the majority of U.S. citizens tend to be intolerant of any language other than English. When dealing with the arts (especially with regards to films and music) too many people have adopted the "if it's not American, it's no good" attitude. In many ways, we've been duped by our own pie-in-the-sky propaganda.

(2) The American pop music scene is the epitome of controlled hype. Nothing can break the shackles unless the Music Mongols want it to. Years ago, after the Beatles hysteria, the industry learned how to control its product and artists. Never again, will we see recording stars calling the shots. The tie-and-suit-guys will push the right buttons, make the \$100 handshakes, and create whatever fad they deem to be the most economically productive within their artificial environment. If that means another five years of rap music, then so be it. At least, they rationalize, it's cheap and easy to produce.

Excuse me. Let me get off this soapbox. I don't want to write a dissertation on the music business. Nor on the intolerance of the American consumer. I want to write about Mylene Farmer...

Mylene.

Throughout her career, she (with composer/director Laurent Boutonnat) has created an absolutely amazing collection of Music Videos. They are the paramount example of a perfect marriage between song and film. Her music video [film] clips are contemporary rock operas, unparalleled to anything in the

American music market. Not even Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, Guns & Roses' *November Rain*, nor Madonna's *Like A Prayer* can begin to match the extravagance found in Mylene's projects.

Forget any preconceived, MTV-influenced idea you may have about music videos. Rather, consider a world where no holds are barred. Where videos are letterboxed films. With a story. Made for adults. Where videos include nudity. And violence. Not to mention breathtaking special effects, extraordinary camerawork, and acting. Sounds like a dream, doesn't it?

On the contrary— you have just imagined Mylene Farmer videos. On the following pages we'll take a closer look at the Big Five, Mylene's most celebrated Music Film Clips.



Mylene [music video: *As Long As They Are Sweet*]

LIBERTINE (1986)

*I-- I am a libertine
I am a whore
I-- I am so fragile
Someone hold my hand*

Mylene's lyrics are bitterly erotic [*"To love is to cry on your knees"* or *"I lost my soul when they raped my heart"*]. As such they lend a powerful backdrop to the hedonistic visual images created by director Laurent Boutonnat. The setting is 18th Century France and the film opens with an early morning gun duel between our heroine-whore (Mylene) and a spurned lover. With deadly aim, she shoots her opponent while members of aristocracy gaze on. A voluptuous prostitute (Sophie Tellier) breaks from the band of onlookers and she screams for revenge.

Abruptly, the scene changes to the parlor of an exclusive high-society brothel. Nohlemen guzzle wine and flirt bawdily with the prostitutes. Mylene is involved in a card game with the other harlots when she is slipped a propositional note from a handsome marquis (Gerard Nublat). The two retire to the bedroom where they become involved in passionate lovemaking (including some impressive shots of the singer's nude physique [*"I'm naked when I practice my virtue"*]).

When Mylene returns to the parlor she is confronted by Sophie. An amazing cat-fight erupts, but Mylene is rescued by Gerard. The two lovers escape on horseback into the woods. Sophie organizes a band of gunmen to follow them. And the film clip ends as Mylene and Gerard are shot off their horse. They grasp helplessly for the comfort of each other's embrace while dying in a pool of blood [*"A bitter taste reminds me that I am in heaven, a lonely heaven"*].

Boutonnat's camerawork rivals the most creative endeavors of most cinematographers, a brilliant combination of expansive long shots and stark close-ups. But his use of colors and tints (particularly the gothic earth tones of his exteriors contrasted with the gaudy crimson of his interiors) adds a foreboding dimension to the film. This video is nearly perfect--

*Mylene Farmer prepares for the duel in **Libertine***



--emphasizing Mylene's physical charms, without ever betraying her strength and inherent tragic detachment.

TRISTANA (1986)

*Her heart has grown weak
Goodbye Tristana
God stretches out his arms
Let her go, let her die*

This project is an ambitious attempt, drawing a parallel between the Snow White legend and Stalin's Russian Revolution.

Actress Sophie Tellier returns, this time playing the Wicked Queen who orders her trusted monk (Secha Prijovic, perhaps more than coincidentally resembling Yagiuu from the *Baby Cart* series) to destroy her innocent rival, the beautiful Tristana (Mylene). "Kill her!" yells the Queen, "And bring me her peach skin!"

But after a narrow escape, Tristana is rescued by seven dwarfs who nurture her back

to health. The Queen becomes enraged, transforming herself into a witch. She finds and kills Tristana, only to meet her own death when attacked by a pack of wolves. Contrary to the original fairy tale, when the prince finds Tristana's body, he carries her into the snowy woodlands and mutters: "Tristana, are you alive or dead?" A ghostly whisper replies: "I don't know."

The video is speckled with footage culled from Stalin's speeches and old newsreels of Russian peasants rioting in the streets which, metaphorically, are meant to draw similarities between the revolt and the traditional fantasy. [*Why should we pay with the blood in our veins?*]

Laurent Boutonnat's cinematography is captivating, but with this film he flexes his directorial muscles by developing longer scenes of dialogue and acting, highlighted by an additional instrumental soundtrack. The Mylene Farmer persona is infused with an air of innocence, purposely missing from the Libertine video. Interesting, she will never again appear so chaste.

AINSI SOIT JE... (1987)

So That I Am...

*But what hope can I have
when everything is black?
So that I am... So may you be
What a pity*

This bleak film clip features some of Boutonnat's best cinematic images, concentrating almost entirely on the detached beauty of Mylene, herself. Often referred to as her suicide film [*"So many mornings, but nothing ever changes; Give me Winter so I can fall asleep"*], this clip is perhaps her most successful mix of song and visuals. Highlighted by extraordinary shots of Mylene's nude body, the black-and-white cinematography is an exercise in contrasts similar to the work of Mario Bava--vacillating between stark footage of falling snow and the stillness of an auspicious inky lagoon.

Mylene is the quintessential tragedienne, her sad eyes remain a constant reminder of a tormented soul concealed under her flawless

body. [*"I'm a liar, that's why I'm cold inside"*] The suicide message in *Ainsi Soit Je* is obvious. But it's also strangely elegant. With a promise of the ultimate peace, the project is grotesquely enchanting.

POURVU QU'ELLES SOIENT DOUCES:

LIBERTINE 2 (1988)

As Long As They Are Sweet

*Love is historic,
It pays to be a whore;
Especially in these times
Love has no allegiance*

A 20 minute music clip? Here is Mylene's most extravagant project, a million dollar attraction which succeeds in establishing her as the world's premiere diva. But, surprisingly, her song takes a backseat to the overwhelming scope of the production. Easily half the music was specifically created for this photoplay--instrumental variations of the theme composed (as a *soundtrack*) to enhance the visual impact. This is a highly unique situation. Traditionally, the purpose of a vid-clip is to promote a song. But this time, the sights are clearly set on a longer-range target. To create a star, that is the goal.

Shot in 35 millimeter, with a production crew of 53 (including a special effects unit, five assistant directors, make-up personnel, wardrobe experts, set designers, six cameramen, four stuntmen, animal trainers, dialogue coaches, and many others) plus a cast of at least a hundred actors, this film clip emerges as a monolith in the world of music videos.

Similar to her earlier video, the setting is 18th Century France. Two British soldiers stumble across the lifeless bodies of Mylene and her lover, presumably after being shot by Sophie Tellier and her gunmen (see the conclusion of *Libertine*). The military men are shocked to find Mylene still alive. They whisk her away to their campsite where Captain Alec Parker (Ian Bahllee) takes lecherous delight in her rescue. Mylene allows herself to be seduced by Parker [*"Nothing is perverse; I'll be anything for a price"*].

Meanwhile, the French Army has paid the local whores (helmed by Sophie Tellier) to infiltrate the British camp. They seduce the soldiers with sex and incapacitate them with wine. When morning breaks, the French battalion attacks the inebriated regiment.

Caught by surprise, the British unit attempts to defend itself. But they are hopelessly at a disadvantage. Cannons blast. Chaos erupts. Rifles cut down countless British soldiers.

Sophie suddenly spots her arch-enemy, Mylene. The two women ferociously attack each other in the midst of the devastating battle. This results in one of the most dynamic girl-fights ever filmed, for any venue.

As the two females scratch and pound on each other, soldiers are cruelly slaughtered. Mylene and Sophie, oblivious to the wanton carnage surrounding them, continue to viciously pummel one another. Eventually, Mylene emerges the victor after skewering Sophie with a hayonet.

A narrator reminds us: "Never forget that every man and every beast who comes into this world must, one day, turn to rotting flesh."

SANS LOGIQUE (1989)

Without Logic

It's a paradox

I am not an accomplice

I won't suffer for another

I suffer enough for myself

Here's a surrealistic film clip with heavy theological symbolism, directly influenced by Mylene's bitter lyrics [*"If God made us in his image, he must be disappointed; or is the creator a disappointment, too?"*]. But as with most Mylene Farmer projects, it also reflects the impending despair of relationships and mistrust between the sexes [*"I could never be blamed if I slit your eyes with scissors"*].

In this production, director Laurent Boutonnat depicts Mylene as a girl who finds herself in bullfight-- and she's the bull. Old cronies strap metal horns to her head while the matador mocks her inability to cope with the fantasy. But when he drops his guard, she

charges and impales him. The matador lies dying; a young spectator caresses a crucifix. And Mylene, suddenly finds herself alone [*"Without logic, I try to be logical; Am I satanic or angelic?"*]. Perhaps this is the ultimate comment on women's role in our society.

Over the years, Mylene Farmer (with Laurent Boutonnat) has produced an array of provocative music film clips, consistently groundbreaking. Irregardless of her absence in the American music scene, she is one of the most creative singers in the world.

Today she is taking the next logical step in her career. Mylene's first feature film, *Georgino* [written and directed by Laurent Boutonnat; produced by Luc (Little Nikita) Besson], has just been released in Europe.

Her new video clip for *Que Mon Coeur Lache* (My Soul (Heart) Is Slashed) was directed by Besson himself, and it features Mylene as an angel who returns to earth and becomes corrupted by carnal vices. Apparently it includes a controversial scene wherein Michael Jackson is smashed by a cross when Jesus drops it from heaven. Watch the pages of ETC for further information.



director/musical composer Laurent Boutonnat

MYLENE FARMER IN CONCERT
Directed by Laurent Boutonnat
Reviewed by Max Allen Collins

Euro-trash cinema fans should rejoice at Video Search Of Miami's efforts to bring Mylene Farmer, Europe's enormously popular pop chanteuse, to the attention of at least one small, if knowledgeable fragment of the American audience. Farmer is arguably too sexy (and violent) in her music films ("video" hardly seems the right word for these long, elaborate visualizations of her songs) for wide American acceptance; she may also be too smart: her adult lyrics and her provocative presentations of her songs both in the films and on stage expose her most direct American counterpart, Madonna, for the juvenile, derivative panderer she is. And Farmer's highly artistic but linear and accessible music films -- with sex and shock elements right out of **Hammer Horror** and **Jean Rollin** -- expose the artier MTV videos for the pompous eye candy they are.

Farmer does not fit an American pop star's profile. While sexy, she is slender, and if this Lolita (she began performing at a young age) descends from a lineage that includes **Brigitte Bardot**, the similarity is more spiritual than physical. With enormous brown eyes and delicate features, Farmer projects a waif-like quality; despite her feminine curves, she also projects, occasionally, androgyny-- or is it the red hair that invokes images of **David Bowie**?

In seeking comparisons, the only American of (relatively) recent years that comes to mind is the wonderful if eccentric New Wave artist **Lene Lovich**, whose pigtails and middle-European wardrobe accompanied wide, theatrical eyes and whoops and yodels and hiccups that made her otherwise straightforwardly melodic rock tunes seem inaccessible to a God-she's-too-*weeend* American audience (and Lovich came via England, at that). But Lovich, in the early years, made several vivid videos (notably, *Bird Song*) that seem to have influenced Mylene Farmer and her gifted director and musical collaborator



Laurent Boutonnat. On several tunes, Farmer invokes, if gently, the *ya-di-ya-di-ya-di* Lovich vocal trademark.

The most obvious point of comparison is Britain's **Kate Bush**, who at her best has wedded art and pop -- and provided interesting and visually arresting music videos -- but in recent years has succumbed to the pretentiousness that was always an element of even her best work. Another Brit bird also comes to mind -- the shyly sensual **Kim Wilde**, who has a track record of intelligent songs with memorable melodies, often wedded to first-rate videos. Despite two hits in America (*Kids In America* and *You Keep Me Hanging On*), the lovely Wilde remains relatively unknown in the states. And if the record execs don't know how to make a gorgeous, talented blonde bundle from Britain -- with two hits under her belt -- into a star, what the hell would they make of Mylene Farmer?

Well, it's the rest of America's problem now. Those of us in the know have access to

VSoM's **Mylene Farmer In Concert** (as well as a collection of the music films). Not only are we are given access to one of the most stunning pop-music stage presentations in memory, we have eloquent, loving translations of the lyrics by Tom Weisser and Francoise Harris which suggest the cadence and poetry of Farmer's very adult stories of love, death, suicide, harlotry, sadomasochism, and so much more.

Strictly from a filmmaking standpoint, **Mylene Farmer In Concert** is a masterpiece: multiple cameras (my guess would be at least six) have provided footage that allowed director Boutonnat to cut the film like a movie, with varying angles and close-ups, and even occasional slow motion, for narrative effect, as opposed to recreating the feel and mood of a concert (though that's there, too). the [astorishingly young] crowd's cultish adulation of Farmer provides a sometimes disturbing backdrop -- there is a Hitler Youth feel to this, particularly when Farmer manipulates their emotions late in the concert (*Mouvements De Lune*) by shedding very believable tears on cue. I for one am glad she is a singer (and actress) and not a politician.

As elaborate as the stage presentation seems (and Boutonnat's masterfully edited film thereof is), the concert does not depend on massive sets or other theatrical pyrotechnics. There is some of that, but mostly Farmer achieves her effects through costume changes and lighting and choreography. Farmer herself did the choreography, yet she does not appear to be a trained dancer. In a crafty, canny display of charisma, Farmer's own movements are smaller, more delicate, less exaggerated than those of the skilled pros behind her; consequently, the viewer's eyes goes directly to her.

Farmer's instrument -- that is, her voice -- is pleasant but unremarkable; how she uses it is something else again. Her typically French, breathy singing is expressive and pure, and perfectly, off-handedly (seeming effortlessness reflecting incredible mastery of craft) delivers her adult lyrics and catchy, often haunting melodies. The band behind her relies heavily on

synthesizer, but this is not disco: the rhythms have a rock/dance basis that provides a solid foundation for the sometimes ethereal Farmer vocals.

Readers of **European Trash Cinema** are in a unique position: they are among the handful of people in America with access to the (otherwise) worldwide phenomenon that is Mylene Farmer.

Mex Allen Collins is the author of the Nate Heller historical thrillers, the latest of which (Carnel Hours) is full of sex, violence and is waiting at your local bookstore (and if it isn't, order it). He has played in rock bands for 25 years, but looks much too young to have done so. On the other hand, co-author Tom Weisser, was in the production end of the record business for an equal number of years, and he tends to show it.

In America, Mylene Farmer's CDs and Cassettes can be found in the Import (International) section of the hipper music stores. A collection of 10 video clips, including those reviewed for this article, is available (with English subtitles) from Video Search of Miami, PO Box 16-1917, Miami Florida 33116, (305) 279-9773. They also offer the Mylene Farmer In Concert tape. The cost for either video is \$25.



Anthony Pica (center) with George Hilton and Alberto De Mendoza [Bullet For Sandoval]



An Interview With **ANTONIO PICA**

by Gian Luca Castoldi
translation and footnotes by Simone Romano

*Antonio Pica is an almost forgotten Spanish character actor whose brief film career never got him the recognition he deserved. Yet, for about a decade, starting in 1964, the talented Pica — a handsome, strong, American-looking man — worked with about every Spanish and Italian B-movie director and performer, including such cult figures as Jesus Franco, Paul Naschy, Leon Klimovsky, Enzo Castellari, Erika Blanc, Helga Liné, and countless other ETC favorites. He also appeared in three "El Santo" films, several Spaghetti Westerns and several films by his close friend Julio Buchs. Most of the time, he was playing small roles, but ETC fans will remember him as the French police inspector who solves the case in **HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN**. The following interview by Gian Luca Castoldi with Pica took place in a picturesque villa on a beautiful, isolated Spanish shore, crowded with artists, actors, and intellectuals spending the night talking and eating "mariscos" or "Cordero asado".*

Where were you born and what did you do before you started your film career?

I was born in Jerez de la Frontera, in the Cadiz district, in 1930. After a somewhat eventful childhood when, besides going to school, I was a "handerrillero" in the bullfights, I was drafted into the army. After military service, I went to Algeria, in the Sahara Desert, where I took part in the oil strike during 1957. I soon began working there as a Petroleum Engineer (DO THEY HAVE ANY OPENINGS?-ED.). In Algeria I got married and had a son; then, in 1962, the political situation got worse and I was forced to go back to Madrid, Spain. But, I continued to work in Africa: every six weeks of work I had three weeks off, which I would spend idling in Madrid with my family. During one of these rest periods, I was in the Gijón bar, on the Paseo de la Castellana, a meeting place for actors, actresses, writers, intellectuals. . . I was sitting there, drinking a vermouth, when I noticed a group of people telling jokes, sitting nearby. One of them was starring at me. When I heard a particularly funny joke, I burst out in laughter, and that man, with a surprised look, asked me if I could speak Spanish. He was surprised because I didn't look Spanish and he invited me to visit the Moro film studio, where he explained all the technical aspects of filmmaking. This was 1964 and he asked me if I had a good memory and gave me a page of script and said I had 15 minutes to memorize it. I read through it four or five times and when he came back I had no problem repeating the dialogue. Surprisingly, that same day he took me to a set and made me sit at a desk, started setting the lights and cameras for shooting. The producer told me to relax and repeat the dialogue I had previously learned when he said "Action". When they stopped the cameras, there was dead silence, and I was amazed, rather than frightened. While I was sweating under those lights, the producer asked me to say it again, with a slight smile. I had no problem doing it, and he paid for my drink and told me he would call me. Two days later, he invited me to the studios and, for the first time I saw

myself on the screen. He told me the customer was very happy with the filming.

Who was the customer? A producer, director?

I can't remember. It had something to do with commercials, but it was too long ago. After that, I started receiving offers for small parts, but sometimes I could not accept, because I was still in the petroleum industry. It was only in 1965, when I quit my job in the oil industry that I finally settled in Madrid.

Were you planning on continuing your film career full-time?

No, I resigned because I was scheduled to move to the Simpson Desert, in Australia, but after 9 years in the Sahara Desert, I didn't want to turn into a lizard! Initially I was planning on settling down in Burgos, where there were some oilfields. I couldn't get that job, because of the socio-political situation at the time, so for 8 years I worked regularly in the film industry. I was in about 70 films, of all types. From westerns to peplum, from comedy to horror. Then I grew bored, that was around 1973/74, and decided to go back to my old occupation, petroleum. I went to the North Sea, working for English, Norwegian and French firms. I continued to travel the world and eventually moved to Egypt. Currently, I'm living in this haven, but I am about to move to South America, to resume work in the oil industry.

How are your memories of your film career?

I was often disappointed by the cinema, maybe because my name is Antonio Pica, or maybe because I lived in this country, that is so complex in many aspects.

I imagine that working in the Spanish film industry, and especially in such a difficult period, must have been quite hard — for political, economical and cultural reasons. So you don't have many good memories of that period?



Well, I do have some nice anecdotes. But I have no pleasant memories regarding the "serious" aspect of this work, or art if you prefer. And from what I have heard, it was not just that period: the crisis still lingers on. Especially if they allot all the funds intended to finance the Spanish cinema to a foreign production...

You mean COLUMBUS, by Ridley Scott?

Right. I mean, all this public money is not being used to finance the national cinema, therefore, the Spanish productions have to struggle with the same poverty as in my time. I don't know if there is a political or financial reason to justify that, but to some people, it seems to be the most profitable way to act.

Let's talk about some films you acted in. Your screen debut happened in a very important film. Anthony Mann's THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, with Sophia Loren. Which role did you play?

In that period, every time I came back from the Sabara, I would apply to a casting director, whose name I can't remember, and he would give me many different kinds of roles to play; from gladiator to slave.

You mean, all in the same film?

Of course, because this was a big production and shooting lasted several months. So, even though I had to work for 6 weeks in Africa, when I was back I had some roles waiting to be played. I even acted as John Ireland's body double — he was playing a barbarian — because they said I looked like him.

In 1964 you made a film TELA DE ARANA. Do you remember the film?

No, because my role was very small. I was little more than extra, because I didn't have the time to accept a larger role. I've never seen the film and don't even know what it's about.

The following year, you made a film for Jesus Franco, ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS (CARTES SUR TABLE), with Eddie Constantine.

I don't remember that one either.

What about Jesus Franco? Was he an odd man?

Not at all. I remember him as a perfectly normal man; the thing that impressed me was the fact that he had to change his name to Jess, in order to sell his works.

In 1966, after acting in quite a few pictures, you were in Al Brescia's TARGET GOLDSEVEN (TECNICA DI UN SPIA). Erika Blanc (now a sophisticated stage actress) was in the cast. What role did you play in this film?

I was sort of a gangster fighting Tony Russell but, even if that was a Spanish co-production,

I never knew what the film was about because I had not seen the entire script. Usually they just gave me a sheet of paper with my lines on it, and the instructions for the next scene. I remember that was the first time I went to Italy, where we worked on the coast near Rome, and that there was a lot of action and hardware involved, for a small European production of that period: helicopters, motor-boats, etc. . . But I never saw this film.

Was it shot entirely in Rome and its surroundings?

The interiors were shot at Cinecittà', the exterior locations were south of Rome, about a 2 hour drive from Rome. (1)

In the same year, you were in Franz Josef Gottlieb's MR. DYNAMITE, a spy adventure starring Lex Barker and Brad Harris; then in WITCH WITHOUT A BROOM, a US/Spanish co-production with Jeffrey Hunter and Maria Perschy. What did you do in that film?

Judging by the title, it would seem a fairy tale, but it was actually a sort of time travel story, from the stone age to the future, through the Roman age, where I had my role. As regards MR. DYNAMITE, it gave me the chance to see Amedeo Nazzari — a real gentleman — and Lex Barker, a great guy too. I have an anecdote about director Gottlieb: we had to film a fight scene — I was always assigned action roles, because of the sports I used to play in real life. I had to perform this fight with a German stuntman, and in the end, when I had to knock him down, he would always move a little too soon, before the final hit. We tried the scene all morning long, in the overpowering heat of the Catalan Costa Brava. The director was nervous because we were wasting lots of film for a single scene, so I went up to him and said, "Gottlieb, why don't we do it without the final two hits and cut the scene short." He said, "OK, but don't hurt him too much." We resumed the scene and I hit the stuntman, catching him totally off-guard, knocking him out.

What kind of film was MR. DYNAMITE?

It was a spy thriller. It had everything: spies, crime, suspense, the Mafia.

How long did the filming last?

MR. DYNAMITE took 2 months, but some films were made in 3 weeks. Another unpleasant memory of that period regards a Latin-America co-production, where we made 2 films in 3 weeks!

What films?

MISION EN ALTA MAR and EL SANTO CONTRA LOS ASESINOS DE LA MAFIA, both shot in Mexico.

Is it true that El Santo never takes his mask off?

He would take it off, but no one on the set ever saw his face. One night at dinner, he asked me why I hadn't greeted him when we met earlier in the day. I didn't remember meeting him because when I had, he was not wearing his mask!

You had a pretty long fight with him in EL SANTO CONTRA EL CRIMEN, a film by Romero Marchent. Did he live up to his fame as a professional wrestler?

You must remember he was in his sixties then, yet he was in excellent shape and was still wrestling: he continued to fight in exhibitions and regular matches. I've heard his son wanted to follow in his footsteps, but apparently he's not as a good a wrestler.

What was COMANDO DE ASESINOS about?

It was an action movie. It concerned the discovery of a new metal, something more resistant than any other material on earth, and countries were fighting over the secret formula. You know the kind of film.

In 1967 you acted in your first Spaghetti Western. *EL HOMBRE QUE MATO A BILLY EL NIÑO* (*THE MAN WHO KILLED BILLY THE KID*) was a somewhat successful film directed by Julio Buchs García, starring Peter Lee Lawrence. I know Lawrence was your close friend.

Correct. I had the pleasure and luck to work on 4 or 5 films with him and I can tell you he was an extraordinary actor; his presence "filled the screen". Unfortunately, the guy met a premature death due to illness. (2)

In *THE MAN WHO KILLED BILLY THE KID*, Lawrence played Billy the Kid; what was your role? Were you the guy who killed him?

Yes. In this version, it wasn't Pat Garrett who killed Billy. It actually appears that Garrett shot him, until the end, when they show me killing him, from behind his back of course.

But was that a "bad" guy?

Of course. I was typecast as a bad guy, and was so used to playing that type of character that, even when I had to play a good sheriff, my face would look mean.

Can you tell me anything about Julio Buchs? You worked on several of his films.

Yes, I had the honor of being his close friend. He was a divine person, but unfortunately he died. I was at his bedside during his last moments.

What kind of a director was he?

He was one of the best directors I ever met. He was very concerned with accuracy, almost to the point of being nit-picky. He always liked his films to look as good as possible, and considering the budgets he had to work with, you can tell he always managed to get the best from them.

Massimo Dallamano's *BANDIDOS* was another Western you acted in.

I have never seen this film and had just a bit role. I was involved in a train robbery.

There is a 1965 film, titled *LOLA ESPEJO OSCURO*. It is hard to get any information about this film. Do you remember anything about it?

I just remember my role; I played a "gringo", an American on a military base in Spain. I had to walk into a "tablao flamenco."

In 1967 you were in a spy film directed by Guido Malatesta, *MISSION PHANTOM*. Fernando Sancho was in it. . .

Sancho was quite famous at the time but I haven't heard of him in years. [*HE DIED SEVERAL YEARS AGO.-ED*]

How was the Spanish film industry at the end of the sixties. Was it as corrupt and degenerate as the American film industry is often depicted?

No, that's only gossip. During that period, the only Spanish people who took lots of drugs were the legends based in Morocco. By the way, I was never really part of the film business because I started my film career very late, and could not adjust myself to that kind of mentality.

In 1967, another Italo-Spanish co-production, *SATANIK* with Magda Konopka. You played a killer, this was a major role wasn't it?

Yes, I played a zombie or robot. . . I was one of a group of people who, under the effects of some drug, had to obey the orders of someone manipulating our will. (3)

What role did you play in *THEY WENT TO ROB LAS VEGAS*, with Jack Palance and Elke Sommer?

It was a quick appearance, as a cop bringing some money into a bank.

And in ENCRUCIJADA POR UN MONJA with Rosanna Schiaffino?

This was a film directed by Julio Buchs, inspired by the massacre that took place in the Belgian Congo. It told the story of one of the nuns, and I played a mercenary captain. A good role, I think.

Another outstanding film is José Forqué's UN DIABLO BAJO LA ALMOHADA, with the extraordinary presence of Ingrid Thulin, best known for her Ingmar Bergman films. Is this an erotic film?

The only thing I can remember about this one is that I had a scene where I waltzed with her, during a ball in a wonderful palace. I'm not sure how erotic it was.

You had a major role in HOMBRE EN LA TRAMPA...

Yes, I had the starring role, but this was an extremely poor production, which is virtually unknown. I played a Frenchman, a sort of mafioso; maybe a drug dealer.

What about Leon Klimovsky, with whom you did DEATH KNOWS NO TIME (PAGO CARA SU MUERTE), among others...

Klimovsky was a great guy, I only know he was born in Argentina, but his origins were from Eastern Europe. I did one of my best films for Klimovsky, OPERATION ROMMEL, with Jack Palance. It was a WW 2 film, in which I played an American army officer, a member of the commandos assigned to save Rommel's life! Can you imagine? I had a great time working on this film with a friendly group of people. I remember I sprained my ankle during a scene in which I had to climb a bridge, because I used to perform my own stunts. I played another American officer in Klimovsky's NO

IMPORTA MORIR, another WW 2 film, but this was a small role.

In 1969, you were in LOS DESPERADOS (A BULLET FOR SANDOVAL), another film by Julio Buchs with George Hilton, a charismatic ETC figure.

He was born in Uruguay, but he lived in Italy and was married to an Italian woman who also worked in the cinema under a pseudonym. Ernest Borgnine was also in the film, he was making a lot of European films in those days. Originally, the film was about the 7 children of Ecija (an episode of Spanish handiwork in the 19th Century), but the American money men didn't find it interesting for the International market, so they had it transformed into a Spaghetti Western!

In 1970 you worked with Giuliano Gemma, one of the most popular actors in Italy.

Yes, that was THE ARCHER OF FIRE. Giuliano Gemma is a friend of mine; the last time I saw him was about 5 years ago, at the house of a producer, a mutual friend of ours. I had just returned from Gabon or the Congo, and Duccio Tessari was there too. That night Duccio and the producer, a guy named Tussel, asked me if I felt like taking a small part in a western they were planning. I accepted, but that was just a small role; I did it only to spend some time with Tessari and Gemma. (The film he is talking about is TEX AND THE LORD OF THE DEEP)

footnote:

(1) According to the film's credits, the exteriors were shot in Lisbon!

(2) According to some sources, Peter Lee Lawrence (real name Karl Hirschbach) shot himself.

(3) I think Pica is mixing up the plots of SATANIK and Franco's ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS-Craig

STAY TUNED FOR PART TWO OF THIS INTERVIEW WHERE PICA TALKS ABOUT PAUL NASCHY, EL SANTO AND MORE!



FEMI BENUSSI

By Erik Sulev

"I am one of the exploited in the world of cinema, but I am resigned to exploit the situation" --Femi

Of all the starlets popularized by Eurotrash films of the sixties and seventies, few are as enigmatic yet memorable as Femi Benussi. Like her peers, Benussi worked in all genres of films, depending on the popular trends at the time. Spaghetti westerns, jungle girl flicks, giallos and yes, those countless "Decameron" inspired epics we all know and love were graced by the presence of Benussi, who, with her piercing eyes and cascading tresses could easily be mistaken for a mythical Greek goddess come to life. Despite her popularity and prolific output, the theatrical career of Femi Benussi came to an end after 1978, when she retired from the film industry to try her luck in television. Her appearances in this medium, however, are

unfortunately (as far as we know), at a minimum. As a result, there was little press about this one time queen of Italian exploitation cinema during the eighties, and all indications suggests that she has in fact retired from the industry altogether.

Eufemia Benussi was born in 1948 at Rovigno D'Istria, in an area which until recently, was known as Yugoslavia. Her classical looks stem from a heritage which, not surprisingly, has strong Macedonian roots. Her ethnic mix and background definitely came to the forefront for most of her performances, many of which found her cast as energetic women whose fiery temperament (among other things), were easily aroused.



These characteristics were highlighted in films like, Alfonso Brescia's *POPPEA UNA PROSTITUTA AL SERVIZIO DELL'IMPERO* [aka *MESSALINA: WHORE OF ROME*]. Benussi excels as the female who calls the shots and is more than happy to let you know it!

While in her teens, Benussi entered the theater world circa 1964. While information is scarce regarding her theatrical work, she rapidly moved to films. Her first feature lensed in 1964 (although not released until 1966) was Amasi Damiani's *UN BRIVIDO SULLA PELLE* (A SHIVER ON THE SKIN). During the following year, she appeared in the more well known Massimo Pupillo flick, *BLOODY PIT OF HORROR*.



Finalmente in Mille e Una Notte (Mille & the Night, Finally)

Her breakthrough role that year however, was thanks to a left-wing intellectual who would create some of Italy's finest art films, Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Recognizing the earthy beauty of Femi Benussi, Pasolini cast her in *UCCELLACCI E UCCELLINI (HAWKS AND SPARROWS)* as Luna, opposite Toto and Nonetto Davoli. In Pasolini's words, "The woman (Femi Benussi) represents vitality. Things die and we feel grief, but then vitality comes back again — that's what the woman represents."

This natural vitality came to the attention of American producers, who the following year, would cast her in what would be her only U.S. feature, *THE BIGGEST BUNDLE OF THEM ALL*, starring the curious combo of Edward G. Robinson, Raquel Welch and Robert Wagner. Soon after, she dived headfirst into European productions, where the roles were far more plentiful, and where she wasn't an outsider.

In 1968, after appearing in secondary roles in several Italian westerns, Benussi took a small role in what would be a turning point for her career — the Italian sexy film. *SEXY SUSAN SINS AGAIN* would be the first of numerous roles in this genre: a genre that would finally popularize Benussi (and her co-star who would become the undisputed queen of the genre, Edwige Fenech) with filmgoers. Thanks to eroticism, Femi Benussi finally found a home.

That same year Benussi starred in two jungle girl features for James (Guido Malatesta) Reed.

The first, *SAMOA, LA REGINA DELLA GIUNGLA (SAMOA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE)*, featured Fenech in the lead role, while Benussi had far less screen time as Yasmine, she nevertheless is captivating for every second she appears on the screen. The "sequel", *TARZANA SESSO SELVAGGIO (TARZANA, THE WILD GIRL)* puts Benussi in the lead and is as equally goofy as the first. Despite their cut-and-paste scripts, and constant use of stock footage, both films are recommended as examples of sixties Italian exploitation.

Femi Benussi in 1001 Erotic Nights



The rest of the decade was spent working in an assortment of films for a number of directors, the most notable being none other than Mario Bava, who used her in *IL ROSSO SEGNO DELLA FOLLIA (HATCHET FOR A HONEYMOON)*. Appearing only in supporting roles during this period, it would appear her career was starting to falter, but in 1971, it was Pasolini once again who would give her career a much needed boost, although this time it was in an indirect fashion.

The critical and boxoffice success of Pasolini's *THE DECAMERON* spawned numerous imitations from producers hoping to cash in with their own bawdy and comical tales. It was with these sexy period piece films that Benussi's looks and talents reached their peak. Her looks were perfect for these films, and while this genre remained in vogue with the Italian public, Benussi remained on top. Even when the trend died out, Benussi was able to parlay her success with an ever increasing number of erotic features and violent thrillers.

In 1975, the French magazine "Sex Stars System" was aware of Benussi's popularity with sexy film fans (How could they not be?), and in an issue spotlighting her and ADOLESCENZA PERVERSA (PERVERSE ADOLESCENCE), her new film with notorious director José Bénazéraf, the magazine had the following to say: (translation courtesy of Martin Sulev)

"For almost ten years, Femi Benussi has lit up the screens of Italian Eroticism with her soft presence. She is a kind of consecrated star, and she has to thank her advantageous physique for her fame and considerable filmography: a body that generously opens the appetite of the obscure rooms: a face with fine skin and harmonious features. . . Unlike most stars, we find that with each new film she becomes even more heaming and radiant."

Upon reaching this career peak, the caliber of films she was finding work in began to quickly deteriorate. Although films like NUDE PER L'ASSASSINO (STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER) can be depended on for providing 90 minutes of questionable and non-PC entertainment, Benussi must have been painfully aware that director Andrea Bianchi and his ilk were no Pasolini. Regardless, she still managed to be prolific, but frustration with the material given her may have been one of the reasons why she threw in the towel in 1978 after appearing in her final film, EMANUELLE IN THE COUNTRY.

One of her first Italian TV appearances was during 1979 in the musical comedy period piece, NITOCHE. Starring as Corinna, the Count's lover, Benussi's participation was hyped as one of her first since leaving her successes in the erotic film world. What followed in her television career is unknown and little information on it is available.

We haven't heard from Femi Benussi for at least a decade now and while we can only assume that she has permanently retired. While a comeback seems unlikely, for Eurotrash fanatics, Femi Benussi deservedly remains one of the all-time film queens.

Here is a list of Euro Westerns featuring Femi Benussi (sometimes using the pseudonym Femi Martin):

BORN TO KILL

w/Gordon Mitchell, Aldo Berti, Tom Felleghy
dir: Tony Mulligan [Antonio Mollica]

DEATH WALKS IN LAREDO

w/Thomas Hunter and Enrico Maria Salerno
dir: Enzo Peri [Elio Petri]

DUEL IN THE ECLIPSE

w/Lang Jefferies and Fernando Sancho
dir: Eugenio Martin/José Luis Merino

FINDERS KILLERS

w/Donald O'Brien and Gordon Mitchell
dir: Gianni Crea

QUINTANA DEAD OR ALIVE

w/George Stevenson and Pedro Sanchez
dir: Glenn V. Davis [Vincenzo Musolini]

RATTLER KID

w/Richard Wyler, Brad Harris, William Bogart
dir: Leon Klimovsky

STRANGER & THE GUNFIGHTER

w/Lee Van Cleef, Lo Lich, and Erika Blanc
dir: Anthony Dawson [Antonio Margheriti]

TIME OF VULTURES

w/George Hilton, Frank Wolf, Pamela Tudor
dir: Nando Cicero



Femi Benussi (foreground) Poppea Una Prostituta...



Calling the Dead to Rise: **MICHELE SOAVI**

by Peter Blumenstock

DELLAMORTE DELLAMORE [OF DEATH, OF LOVE]

Italy/France/Germany 1993

P: Audifilm, Urania Film, KGP, Reteitalia,
Bibofilm & TV

Director: Michele Soavi

Screenplay: Gianni Romoli, based on a
novel by Tiziano Scavi // DoPh: Mauro
Marchetti // Editor: Franco Fraticelli // FX:
Sergio Stivaletti

Cast: Rupert Everett, François Hadji
Lazaro, Anna Falchi, Stefano Masciarelli,
Barbara Cupisti, Mickey Knox, Clive Riche,
Fabiana Formica, Katja Anton.

Back in 1979, when the undead from Lucio Fulci's *Zombi 2* (ZOMBIE, 1979) made their way from Matul towards the "civilized" world, the often-praised, often-scolded "Zombie All'Italiana" first saw the light of day. Who doesn't remember that unforgettable scene from Fulci's *Paura Nella Città Dei Morti Viventi* (GATES OF HELL, 1980), in which an unlucky actress had to vomit real lamb's intestines to give the impression they were her own. The name of the nice young man sitting next to her should by now be a household word to every horror fan. Michele Soavi is a classical self-made director—without a film school diploma hanging over the bed—who got the

chance to learn film-making starting at the bottom. He worked as an actor and assistant director for Aristide Massaccesi, appeared as a homicidal maniac in Lamberto Bava's *La Casa Con La Scala Nel Buio* (A BLADE IN THE DARK 1983), and made the ravens for Argento's *Opera* (1987) fly.

Soavi, who is only 36 years old, might be the youngest Italian director with enough technical know-how and honest dedication to the horror cinema who might be able to lead the spaghetti thriller innovatively into the forthcoming millennium. His considerable talents as a feature film director were proven more than once in recent years. Beginning with the mythical bird masked killer in *Deliria* (STAGEFRIGHT, 1987), over the Gothic horrors of *La Chiesa* (THE CHURCH, 1989) right to the New Age terror of *La Setta* (THE SECT, 1990): Soavi travels in new, visionary ways. That much becomes clear from reading the press information for his latest work, *Dellamorte Dellamore* ("Of Death, Of Love").



original ad mat for *Dellamorte Dellamore*

Buffalora is a little Lombardian province town, well-equipped with all the usual bourgeois crap—violence, poverty bureaucracy and the obligation to conformity—which makes it quite hard for some people to lead a satisfying life. One of the locals is Francesco Dellamorte, custodian of the local graveyard, who never leaves the protective walls of his working place (even when he tries, something magical always leads him back) and feels good only in his small, dead world. But the graveyard isn't quite as dead as one might expect.

First, there's Gnaghi, Francesco's bald-headed, handicapped assistant, and... some corpses that simply don't want to stay in their graves! A phenomena that only happens in this very place, and only to people who died exactly seven days ago. Dellamorte wouldn't be a good custodian if he allowed this kind of hooliganism to take place: Equipped with his revolver, he gives eternal peace to the resurrected. Of course, nobody "outside" believes his story. He is thought to be an eccentric weirdo. So Dellamorte "kills" the dead day after day, month after month, year after year, with a routine as if it were the most natural thing on earth. Till one day—after a girl he loves has died (in fact, it is THREE different women he's in love with, referred to as "the three she's", all played by the leading actress of Marco Risi's *Nel Continente Nero* [1992], Anna Falchi)—, he just isn't able to distinguish between the living and the living dead: Armed with his revolver, Dellamorte goes to town to "save" mankind...

"In the tradition of the Italian cinema of the sixties, with allusions to several masters of the fantastic, such as Mario Bava, Riccardo Freda or Vittorio Cottafavi, the film makes an attempt to re-interpret the fantastic cinema in a simultaneously ironic and melancholic way, using the devices of visionary cinema and the fairy-tale. The character of Francesco Dellamorte has his roots firmly grounded in the culture of Europe. This is a European fantastic film." (Quotation from the press-book)

It was a path of trial and tribulation, to get the five-million-dollar budget for *Dellamorte Dellamore* together. As it was delayed, several



other Soavi projects materialized, only to disappear again (for instance, Soavi is still supposed to direct a new film for Massaccesi's Filmirage production company).

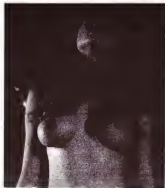
What to do? A glimpse toward the States was a great temptation, but contained unappealing conditions: Matt Dillon was considered as Dellamorte. In return, it would have rained dollars, and there would have been an American distributor. Whatever the cash, Soavi didn't like this proposition one bit because he favored Rupert Everett in the leading role. Finally, that nice old tradition of European co-production was taken into consideration, the tradition which also helped the Italian cinema to keep its head above the water in the late sixties. Soavi's film is an Italian-French-German co-production. There was also help from the European film foundation, Euroimages. The first zombie movie

to be partly-financed from Brussels! Too many cooks spoil the broth, some people may think. Thus, it was all coordinated by only one production company: Audifilm, founded by scriptwriter Gianni Romoli (*La Setta*, *Fantaghirò* [1991]), Tilde Corsi and Soavi himself. So, beyond the shadow of a doubt: Soavi directs a movie with the cast and crew of his wishes.

Soavi: "Right now, I am 35 years old. I have made three films definitely in the tradition of the horror/fantasy genre. After 10 years of working side-by-side with masters such as Dario Argento and Terry Gilliam, and after absorbing their art, their style, their personality, their way of working, I now feel myself able to do MY kind of film. A film that really sets me apart from these directors, that tells things that fascinate me, things that were not often talked about, which mirror a part of my generation."

And indeed, the crew reads like a "Best-of" Italian cinema: Franco Fraticelli, the editor of Argento's movies for decades, is responsible for assembling the film; the art direction was by Antonello Geleng, who also worked on Soavi's *La Setta*, several Margharite von Trotta films and Fellini's TV commercials; Director of Photography is Mauro Marchetti, long-time operator under Italy's demi-god Vittorio Storaro (Bertolucci's favorite DoP, also responsible for Argento's debut film, *L'Uccello Dalle Piume Di Cristallo*, in 1969) and prize-winner of the film festival of Venice, where he was awarded the Osella D'Oro for his work on *Ragazzi Fuori*; effects are helmed by Sergio Stivaletti.

The underlying concept is actually quite simple: Take a cult novel of a cult novelist and try to transform it into a cult movie. King and Barker know a thing or two about this method. The author of *Dellamorte Dellamore*, Tiziano Sclavi, had more luck, at least on artistic terms, than his two contemporaries: Giancarlo Soldi's *Nero* (1992), the first attempt to adapt a Sclavi novel for the screen, almost meant death to production company Titanus because nobody went to see it, but it is nevertheless a remarkable and highly original film that refused to reduce Sclavi's characters to the usual pre-fab nitwits.



Anna Falchi

While *Nero* was a decidedly uncommercial mixture of black comedy and horror, *Dellamorte Dellamore* is a zombie thriller that not only includes originality, poetry and social criticism, but also doesn't fall short on the FX level, which should help the box office receipts. Besides, novel hero Dellamorte is considered to be the basis for Sclavi's zombie-vampire- and serial-killer-annihilating ghost-hunter, Dylan Dog. And this guy is also Italy's most popular comic book hero, bringing lots of Lire to its editors and has created the annual Dylan Dog Film Festival in Milan.

Sclavi sees Dellamorte as a romantic intellectual, the black-hearted alter ego of Dylan Dog. Physically, they're both the same—black hair, infinitely sad eyes, slim and tall of stature. But while Dylan Dog hunts the monsters of the "outside" world, Dellamorte is only confronted with the monster in himself and those of his small world.

Soavi was intrigued by the collision of two absolutely contrary worlds: of the living, of the dead. The graveyard is Dellamorte's mythical playground, his paradise of joys and secrets. Dellamorte is a social outsider who has built an interior world for himself, only to find he is a prisoner of it. Each attempt to be part of the "outside" world has failed. And because something is terribly wrong in his world, in his head, Dellamorte's downfall is preordained. How far Soavi will be able to include metaphorical games such as these in his narrative, only time will tell.

Soavi and Audifilm should be well aware of the inherent dangers. That the film's promotion will appeal to the fans of the comic books is to be expected. Any maybe it's just for the better: The comic books, of which hundreds of thousands are sold month after month, will ensure a certain amount of success. Some people in Italy seem to have learnt a lesson. For the first time, there seems to be a popular folk hero who could have the potential to fight all the American heroes at the box office. Whether or not this is the case will be seen in the near future. Let's be optimistic and hope this event marks the return of Italian horror.



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